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WASHINGTON (AP) - The Carter administration, concerned about the presence of Soviet troops in Cuba, "will not be satisfied with maintenance of the status quo," Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance said Wednesday.

Vance, in a carefully worded statement at a news conference, did not rule out the possibility that the SALT II treaty would be held hostage unless the combat capability of the Soviet troops in Cuba is eliminated.

He said he has asked Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin to return as soon as possible from home leave for "serious" discussions on the subject.

Vance indicated that the United States will not ask for the removal of the Soviet personnel from the island. "It is the combat nature of the unit which is a matter of very serious concern to us. We have realized that there are training and signal units stationed there over a period of time," he said.

He said the exact action the United States will seek would in part be determined by Soviet responses to questions about the mission of the troops and their basing. "The interests of our country would not be served by my now going into the specifics of our approach," Vance said.

Asked whether the problem should affect ratification of the strategic arms limitation treaty, Vance did not give the usual standard administration response that the treaty should be judged independently of Soviet activities elsewhere.

Instead, he gave a vague statement that he later repeated almost verbatim under continued questioning:

"SALT is a matter of fundamental importance. I think that hearings on SALT should proceed. However, we will be keeping in close touch with the Senate committee, and members of the Senate as we proceed in our discussions with the Soviets."

Administration officials said Vance's response reflected the political reality that some senators have said they will link SALT to the Soviet troop presence in Cuba whether the administration likes it or not. In addition, it was designed to underscore for the Soviets the seriousness with which the administration views the issue.

But the officials said the administration has made no decision that SALT should be linked to the troop issue.

Vance said there is a "vast difference" between the current situation and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, where nuclear weapons were involved.

He said the best intelligence estimates are that the estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Soviet combat troops have been in Cuba since the mid-1970s, before the Carter administration took office.

Vance denied that there was an intelligence failure or that the situation reflected badly on American ability to monitor Soviet activities relating to SALT verification.

"The information has been fragmentary and difficult to put together, like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. One has to continue to examine the various fragments. Sometimes, the fragments all fall into place and you can arrive at a conclusion. This is what happened," he said.

He insisted that there was a "clear difference" between the problem of detecting the nationality of ground troops and that of spotting new missile sites in the Soviet Union. Monitoring ground troops "is much more difficult," he said.

Vance apparently was ready and eager to deliver a blast at Cuban leader Fidel Castro, anticipating that reporters would ask for his reaction to Castro's anti-United States speech to the non-aligned nations' meeting in Havana.

But he was not asked. So, after the news conference, Vance aides distributed a written copy of his answer prepared for reporters.

"Castro's own policies do not deviate from those of the Soviet Union. The Cubans are dependent on the millions of dollars of Soviet aid they receive every day; they accept the presence of Soviet troops on their territory; and they have deployed their own troops in foreign countries with the assistance of the Soviet Union. This cannot be called non-alignment," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Senate leaders were given a private briefing on the Cuban situation by top intelligence officials.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee had been scheduled to resume public hearings on SALT II Wednesday, but postponed the sessions to hear the closed-door testimony on the Cuban situation.

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